ADDRESSES BEFORE THE RURAL EDUCATION SECTION OF THE NEW YORK STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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AND

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WHAT IS EXPECTED OF DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS

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ANDREW S. DRAPER, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

I would not disguise the fact that I have more real satisfaction in this meeting of newly chosen district superintendents, all with their new and higher standing, powers, and functions established in the Education Law, than in any educational gathering I have attended in many years. This is the first concrete result of a campaign for uplifting the country schools that was stoutly, and often subtly, resisted, and that was more than once menaced with humiliating failure. It was a longer and more serious struggle than it should have been. The public understanding of the matter was much confused, and it required as much explanation and argument to accomplish the absolutely obvious thing in New York school administration as ought to be necessary to carry a presidential election or an amendment to the Federal Constitution. There are many here today who became real veterans in that long campaign, and they may be assured that I am glad to see them here. It is not strange if we have something of the feeling of old soldiers who carry forlorn hopes to glory. With sincere appreciation of the constancy and the efficiency of so many in this good cause, it is a little difficult to speak of one, but it really ought to be said that a lion's share of commendation ought to go to Dr Thomas E. Finegan, Third Assistant Commissioner of Education, for the unanswerable and always good-natured ways in which he has shaped up the arguments, the keenness with which he has scented ambuscades, and the absolutely unrelenting earnestness with which he has braced up the troops on every part of the field. It is fortunate that he is to have much to do with administering the system. Many of you know much of country schools, but there is not one of you that knows more of them than he does. He will speak to you in a little time. I have something of the feeling that I might well leave it to him to do all the speaking, but I confess that I wanted a part in the exultation and I would have no doubt in any mind as to the measure of my concern and of my expectations about this epoch-making movement in New York education.

You have been appointed superintendents of the rural schools. There are two hundred and seven of you, almost twice as many superintendents as there were school commissioners. The old districts were generally so large that real supervision was impossible, even if the old law had contemplated it, which it did not. Putting two districts where there was one before is an important factor in increasing the efficiency of supervision. That gives the superintendent a much better chance to do something worth while, but whether he does it or not depends upon himself. The Education Department expects much of each, and will do all it can to help each to do conspicuously good work; it will censure a superintendent for indifference and will remove him for wilfully or ignorantly violating either the letter or the spirit of the new law. This is plain language, but plain language is best. It would be absurd to characterize it as a menace or a threat. It is in the interest of two hundred and seven officials whom the law places under my supervision, every one of whom starts out with my confidence and carries with him my good wishes. It is for the sake of a perfect understanding. I have my responsibility as well as you yours. What I say is in the discharge of that responsibility.

It is well to be much more explicit and to tell you in detail what the Education Department expects of you.

In the first place it expects that you will be free and independent school superintendents. It can not be said too often that the common schools are to be kept free from all political or denominational partisanship. Officers of the schools are to assert this and exemplify it. They are to bar out everything to which any patron of the schools can justly object. Above all, they are not to descend to any course of partisan conduct to which fifty, or twenty, or one per cent of the people may be conscientiously opposed. They are to attend to the schools very exclusively. The plain English of this is that they are not to help run political machines; they are not to do political work for leaders or committees. They are to hold their own opinions and vote as they please, but they are not to make themselves obnoxious to any by exerting any influence of their position as superintendent of schools to effect nominations or get votes for a ticket on election day. The school organization is to offend none; it is to count upon the support of all. This is at once sound principle and good policy. You will be expected to regard it conscientiously.

You will of course seek to enlarge your knowledge and improve your professional qualifications. It is one of the very strong points of the new law that it excludes the uneducated from these superintendencies. You have gained certificates of your ability to teach in the schools of the State without further examination. That means much, but if there is one among you who thinks it is enough he is doomed to failure. Read systematically for the enlargement of your knowledge. Of course keep up with the current news. But there is a vast difference between knowledge and news. Appreciate it and act accordingly. Efficient school superintendents must have knowledge, not merely of the technical rules of arithmetic and grammar, but of the world's stores of literature. No one really has any hold upon that without the sincere desire to tighten his grasp. If you have that, your grasp upon administration, and courses of study, and methods of teaching, and all such, may come very quickly and easily to those of you who are active. But if you are long on frills and pretense, and short on the substance of knowledge, if you are without the elements of intellectual growth, your rising sun will be obscured by a cloud and is even liable to drop out of the heavens altogether.

The law provides that a district superintendent "shall devote his whole time to the performance of the duties of his office and shall not engage in any other business or profession." That is good English, easily understood. It will not be construed so as to take its vitality out of it. You may not practise law, or medicine, or seek insurance, or till a farm, while holding this office. The law also says that when you are not engaged in the clerical and administrative work of your office, you shall be visiting and inspecting the schools. You understand that: do not get confused about it. How truly you observe all this will soon be known to the Third Assistant Commissioner of Education, and he is bound to act upon what he knows. Be so square and true about it that he will have no question marks against your name.

For your own sakes I bid you to read, and reread now and then, section 393 of the Education Law. It is not pleasing reading for a public assemblage, but it contains good propositions to commune with in secret. It bears upon the relations of superintendents to the sale of books, furniture, apparatus, and the like to the schools; to contracts made by trustees; and to gifts and rewards for exerting official influence in favor of the pur-

chase of any school supplies or for recommending the employment of a teacher. There is no need of studying this section to see just how far one may go without violating the law. The principle is absolute that a school superintendent can not lawfully accept any emolument beyond his salary for the exercise of his official influence or authority. He must understand that completely.

If sections 393 and 394 of the Education Law claim the secret contemplation of superintendents, there can be nothing secret about section 395. All of its fourteen subdivisions deserve to be printed large and posted in the schoolhouses. It declares, not what the superintendent is prohibited from doing, but what he is *required* to do. Where the law directs that certain definite things shall be done and creates the officers to do them, the people are justified in expecting that there will be results.

It is expected that the schoolhouses will be cleaned and renovated and made sanitary and comfortable. It is expected that outbuildings will be made decent and convenient, free from any immoral stains and suitable for the free use of children. Do not evade this thing and of course do not bluster about it. Talk of it without hesitation. Expect that the teacher will help. See the trustee about it. If necessary, tell him what should be done and how to do it. Assume that he will be glad to do it. if he should refuse, then require him to do it. Do not *require* too often, but there will be many times when you will have to *require*, and when such times come be sure that you follow the matter to the very end.

It is expected that out of all this there will be a fresh impulse toward new buildings in the places of such as are unsuitable for use and beyond repair. The law leaves less excuse for disreputable schoolhouses in New York than in any other state. Keep sane but be persistent about the matter. Talk with the people in their homes, induce district meetings to discuss it, and be on hand yourself to show pictures and plans of new houses that will stir the pride of the village or the neighborhood. The Education Department will provide the material to aid you.

Next spring as the snow is disappearing, when the colts begin to kick up, and the cows begin to look for the first blades of green grass, and the hens begin to scratch on the sunny sides of the barns, and the boys must play leapfrog, it will be time for raking off the school grounds, straightening the walks, and setting out a tree and a shrub or two.

There is a direction in this law that you hold meetings of trustees and advise with them and counsel them in relation to the interests of the schools. That is a new and an important provision. Find the convenient time and place where you can get five or ten trustees together, and have dinner in company and talk over buildings and teachers and courses of study. Let them do all the talking they will; but answer criticisms, explain needs and difficulties, and bind them together in the sincere determination to have the most attractive schoolhouses and the most vital teaching in your supervisory district. Make sure that the first meeting is so interesting that all will want to come to the next one.

And here we are again around to the teacher and the things taught, but we have come to this part of the circle this time with a new and larger opportunity to do something worth while. I admonish you to be exacting yet just, firm yet kind, aggressive yet balanced and sane. Much more is expected of you than we have had from the school commissioners. Each one of you has had much of the training and not a little of the experience of the teacher. You have lived in the atmosphere and you are moved by the spirit of the school system. Do by teachers as you would be done by and as the interests of children and the progress of the New York school system require. Help the young teachers and try to keep the older ones zestful and happy. But the teaching must be progressive and vitalizing, and the fact that it is must be evidenced by the children in their homes.

You have been commissioned to lead the school work of several towns. Do not hesitate to take the lead. Show that you are the superintendent by superintending. Embrace every fair opportunity to quicken public sentiment through the newspapers and by speaking at all manner of gatherings. When you write and speak do it as well as you can. Try to gain a sense of educational perspective, by which I mean try to have a sane appreciation of educational values; remember that not half that is to be learned is in textbooks, and that children are justified in rebelling against teaching that has no life or juice in it. Fall in with the very common thought of the day and associate *doing* with thinking in teaching. Make certain that the children are trained soundly in English, and in simple mathematics, and in truthfulness, and in manners; mix in rational sports, regard for health, knowledge of the earth, and

love for animals. Adjure teachers to train children to respect labor and to do things, never losing sight of the fact that while nothing can excuse any American child from a mastery of the fundamentals of an English education, yet the boy who is long on training a horse, or sailing a boat, or raising corn, or making a wagon, and a little short on the literary side of things, is likely to be a larger and a more useful man than his mate who is quick and exact in the schoolroom but seems unable to get hold of something which he can do to earn a living and which the world must have done. But we are not forced to an election between these children with differing traits and tendencies. Both of them, all of them, are to be trained in both culture and efficiency. Equalizing advantages somewhat, making absolutely sure of the fundamentals, we are to give special gifts or propensities their opportunities.

I advise you to encourage the schools to interest the pupils in the agricultural and mechanical and homemaking industries. It is to be done through the ingenuity and versatility of the teachers. School literature is full of this thing, and you may easily work it into the schools. It is fascinating to children. If I thought it would work harm to the reading and writing and numbers, I would oppose it. I know it will work to their advantage. If I thought it would keep pupils from going to high school and college, I would oppose it. I think it will send more to the higher schools. It will broaden the higher schools or at least it will concentrate their intensiveness upon the work that has the largest claims. The vital need of the educational work of this country is the training of pupils in manual and vocational efficiency. What helps the hands of pupils will help their heads. What is needed is greater respect for all manner of work, and special enthusiasm for some particular work. Too many never have any enthusiasm for anything. Never let go of what is in the books, but encourage the schools to do whatever will arouse the special interest of pupils in *something.*

Why not public commendation for the neatest schoolhouse and the best kept grounds in your supervisory district, as the railroads give for the best kept section along the road? Why not a competition between the schools in a town or in the district over the farm products raised, or the hand work done by boys and that done by girls? Encourage the ingenuity of teachers in initiating movements which can do no harm and will arouse the interest and appeal to the pride of children and parents.

The teachers institutes have been discontinued. They were good in their day, but their day is past. The teachers are at the very beginning more thoroughly trained than they used to be. They do not need so much lecturing and stimulating as they did before the uniform examinations were established and the literature and other helps for teachers were so prolific. What they do need is frequent conference with the superintendent and between themselves. You are to arrange such conferences. They may be by neighborhoods, or towns, or two towns. They should of course be in a perfectly healthy environment where all may be glad to go. They should be for a territory which will enable all to come in the morning and return at night. A good nutritious dinner at reasonable expense should be arranged. Then there should be a live conference on the everyday interests of the schools. Something of the success of these conferences will depend upon the settings of the room you meet in. It would be better to sit around a table where each one may look all the others in the face, than in a stiffly arranged schoolroom or church. You will have to have plenty of good, live materials for these conferences. You will know where to get these materials. But give the teachers every opportunity to tell their troubles and ask their questions. Having done that, confer about the schoolhouse and grounds, and about the school library and the appliances and apparatus. Confer about the work in general and about the adaptations to particular localities or individuals. Confer about what the teachers are doing for self-improvement. *Confer,* I say; do not lecture. Do not do it in a stilted way but in an easy, familiar way, so that all may have an inclination to enter into the matter, and may go home at the end with the feeling that it was worth while to attend. Let the gathering be *small* enough for a conference, and insist that it shall be a conference. Avoid formal or heavy papers. You will not need stenographers. Keep agents out. They may have their place, but it is not there. Do not expect some one from the State Department; carry forward these conferences on your own account. Do not wind them up with a dance. Act freely and hold them often. In a word, establish relations with the teachers in your district similar to those which exist between an efficient superintendent and the teachers in a city or village. Begin to assume that the everlasting country school problem is really solved.

Of course you will look after the teachers training classes, and you will be well known at the normal schools. You should steadily seek to reinforce these institutions and connect your schools with them so that the schools will be reinforced by them.

You are to advise the trustees as to the employment of teachers, the adoption of textbooks, and the purchase of library books and supplies. Do it freely if you really know what you are talking about. If you are a little uncertain make a business of finding out so you can talk confidently. Your success will depend very largely upon the new teachers employed, upon fitting teachers into the places to which they are best adapted, and upon the books and appliances which are provided for the schools. Out of all this the new spirit of the schools must grow. As this duty will be very common and extremely important, you are likely to see much trouble in connection with it. You certainly will unless you have firm ground under your feet and act without fear or favor. Under no circumstances do anything in this connection under influence, persuasion, or threat. Think matters all over for yourself and do just what you think is for the best. More trouble comes to public officers because of their commendable desire to please some friends, or through their unworthy desire to show their powers, than from any other cause. Bend to nothing of this kind. Stand up straight, leaning neither forward nor backward. Have reasons for what you do, whether you think it necessary to state them or not. Be able to look any man or woman in the eye. Let the consequences be what they may, bear your own responsibility in ways that satisfy your own minds and consciences, and let other people carry the responsibility that belongs to them.

It would be well to announce a certain day in each week when you will be at home, so that all who may want to come and see you may count upon finding you. Apparently it should be a day when teachers are free from the schools. You are bound to know the roads in your district as well as the mail carrier does, and you ought to be as familiar with all the homes as is the tax collector. An official visit to a school is not made by a look at the schoolhouse. Work half a day with a school and make a visit accomplish something worth while. Scrutinize all the parts of the building and outbuildings, and look to the furnishings and appliances. If there is a

nuisance on the premises, require that it be abated at once as the law amply empowers you to do. If the building needs repairs or if the teacher is without conveniences for her work, go and see the trustee and arrange to have things made right. Make your visit very welcome to the teacher. Do not sneak and do not bluster. Do not let the thermometer drop forty degrees while you are there. More emphatically still, *do not flatter*. Just be kind and frank and capable. Know what in the way of spirit and efficiency ought to be there, and work to get it there. Bring in something that will brace up the school, make the teacher a little more earnest, a little more courageous, and a little more sure-footed. If it is necessary to suggest things to her, as it generally will be, do it without hesitating but in ways that will gratify her if she has many of the attributes of a true teacher. Before you correct her it would be well to make sure that what you propose is consistent with the educational policies, theories, and methods which the training classes and normal schools have been instilling into her. Perhaps it would be better to see first whether she has the school in her hands, holds the interest and respect of pupils, and is giving them plenty to do. If she has, it might be well to let her keep on doing it in her own way, whether her ways seems to meet the sacred canons of the higher pedagogical criticism or not. If she has not, then go in and try to improve matters, with the assurance that you will not make them worse, and with knowledge that it is your business, and with some confidence that it is within your power to make them better. Do not gossip around the district. Do not have profound secrets or many confidences. Do not make promises to be performed longer ahead than tomorrow or the next day. When you enter into an engagement, take out your notebook and put it down, and mark it off when you have done as you agreed. Do not cross bridges before you get to them, and when you do cross them march over like an old soldier, erect and right in the middle of the road.

You will have to use your sense as to the exercise of your powers. The law always assumes that powers will be exercised by rational officers. That does not mean that an officer shall be left to himself to determine what the law is or what it means; nor does it mean that an officer may decide whether a law shall be executed or not. The purpose of the law must always be considered; mere expressions must never be taken

by themselves and invoked to overthrow or thwart the manifest intent. Your duties and functions are general. You will have to do some things which are not specified in the Constitution and the written laws. The main purpose of the Education Law concerning you is that you shall be capable and assiduous in building up the schools and in quickening education in your districts. You are to do whatever you can do that will promote that end, unless it violates some law or invades some right.

It is to be hoped that you will distinguish between the management of the business interests of the schools through the district meetings and the trustee system, and the supervision of the instruction through superintendents. Beyond tendering friendly advice you should not interfere with school meetings or the doings of the trustees, except in cases where the law expressly empowers you to give directions. As to the instructional work, you should not allow the meetings or the trustees to do more than give you friendly advice. As to the teaching, you should know what needs to be done, and see that it is done. But by all means, officers chosen to promote the same good ends should treat each other with every consideration and work together harmoniously and effectually.

The new law provides for the payment of your official expenses by the State up to a limit of three hundred dollars a year. That is an important factor in the new plans for keeping you traveling about your districts. Your bills will have to be sworn to and they must be approved by the Commissioner of Education. None but moneys which you actually pay out will be approved. Now let there be no foolishness about this thing. Carry a memorandum book, and enter every item you pay out and at the time when you do it. Every three months transfer that list to the blank forms provided and send it to the Department. Be exact to the cent. There is no need of bending over backward: if a farmer offers you a dinner, as farmers are prone to do, eat it unless there is danger of some aberration of mind which may dispose you to charge the State for it. It is hard for most of us to be away from home, and when your duty requires it you are entitled to make yourselves comfortable if you can. But whatever else you do, keep your integrity and independence; they are the mainstays of success in school supervision.

The salary paid you by the State is not large. But you have accepted the trust. The State is not likely to increase

the amount very soon, because the State has been induced to assume an additional burden of more than $150,000 for this rural supervision, only after much persuasion. But there is no reason why the supervisory district should not add to the superintendent's salary. If he is worth more, there is every reason why that should be done. Such addition to the salary by the supervisory district is the only expense which the district will have to incur for school supervision. The State pays a part of the salaries of superintendents in the cities and villages, but not the whole of them, as it now does in the farming districts. The new law encourages the districts to add to your salaries. It can be done by the supervisors of the towns in the district. I do not advise that you agitate that subject. I would not fawn upon supervisors and disgust them if they are self-respecting men. You can not expect them to increase your salaries unless the sentiment of the people supports it. I would try to do so much for the schools that the people would know about it and the common sentiment of the district would say that I ought to be a little better compensated. Men and women who think more about success than about wages are the ones who in the end get the most wages.

You are the advance agents, the leaders and promoters, of an educational revival in the rural districts of New York. Your territory reaches to the remotest corners of the State. It lies everywhere beyond the boundaries of the cities and the villages of five thousand people. It runs through all the valleys and lies over all the hilltops of our imperial Commonwealth. Your work has to do with all the homes. It has much to do with the potentiality of our lands, with the volume and value of our manufactures, with the happiness of the people, and with the greatness of the State itself. It must be a rational, not an emotional or spasmodic, revival. It must possess learning, it must steadily gather in knowledge and power, it must organize with expertness and fearlessness, it must apply pedagogical methods that have been proved to be of worth, and it must exercise, wisely and for a long time, the powers which the State has entrusted to it, if it is to justify the recent legislation which has given it existence and created its opportunity.

You are all-important factors in a great undertaking which is expected to mark the opening of a new era in New York education greater than any that has gone before it. In a year or two there must be very definite results in every county of the

State. I have not dared merely to appeal to you to bear your part sanely and bravely. I have declared what is *expected* of you. There is nothing impossible, indeed nothing extremely difficult, about organizing an enduring educational movement which will further uplift the State and add to her prestige in all the states. I anticipate it with entire confidence. You may be assured that it will not be put in jeopardy by any failure of the supervision which the law directs the Education Department to give to the work you are to do. The Department is intensely in earnest, and expects to be exacting, even unrelenting. But that only means that its officers want to join earnestly, honestly and sanely with you, and want you to join in the same way with them, in a very serious and a very vital undertaking, the success of which will bring honor to all of us, and, what is vastly more important, will bring great advantage to the people whom we cherish and to the State which we are all anxious and proud to serve.

THE OBLIGATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS

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THOMAS E. FINEGAN, THIRD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

The pleasure of meeting the district superintendents selected under the law of 1910, the first body of real, professional school superintendents chosen to supervise the country schools of this State, has been anticipated with keen interest for many weeks. No body of educational experts has ever been chosen in this country or elsewhere which has possessed greater opportunities to render their constituents pronounced service than is afforded by the work upon which you district superintendents are about to enter.

This is not only your distinct opportunity but public sentiment is so well crystallized upon the necessity of the performance of this work, that negligence or failure on your part to avail yourselves of this great privilege will not be pardoned or tolerated. The very necessities of the civilization and commercial interests of the whole State are such that the work which has been assigned to you must in some way and by some body of educational supervisors be completely and satisfactorily performed. You must therefore possess a true conception of the service which you are to render the schools under your supervision, or the legislative authority of our State which responded to an advanced educational sentiment in the creation of your office with its powers and duties, will undoubtedly be invoked to abolish the office and create some other agency to perform its functions. In other words, as you enter upon the performance of your duties, you must understand that you are to render unselfish and distinguished services to the educational system of the State and that you are not simply to regard yourselves as fortunate persons who have been chosen to fill a public office and entitled to the emoluments thereof.

That you enter upon this work in the proper spirit and with a clear realization of its importance is confidently believed. That you are competent to perform this service, judged by the standards of intellectual attainments and educational experience, is amply attested by the credentials which you bear. Of the two hundred and seven superintendents authorized under the law, two hundred and four have been chosen. Of these,

forty-two are college graduates; twenty are graduates of the State Normal College; ninety-two are graduates of State normal schools; thirty-five hold life state certificates; and twenty-eight hold the teachers permanent certificate. Several are graduates of both colleges and State normal schools. The average teaching or supervision experience is twenty years. Many have served as high school principals or village superintendents and fifty have rendered efficient services as school commissioners. Since the days of the Revolution, we have been taught that "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," and with this body of educated, experienced men in charge of the supervision of our country schools, we may well believe that the price of success in your undertaking will be "eternal vigilance."

You should possess a complete mastery of the machinery of the school system of the State. You should understand the history of its growth and progress. You should have clear ideas of its aims and purposes. You should always be students of educational problems and alert in determining the necessity of improvements and changes which are demanded by the best educational thought of the day. It is quite as important that you should study and understand these problems and be able to contribute toward their solution as it is that you should possess a comprehensive knowledge of courses of study, of the subject matter which is to be taught, and of the accepted methods of presenting a subject in the classroom, if you expect to render efficient services to the State and to the district in which you are employed.

You should have a keen appreciation of the accepted policy of the State in its maintenance of a system of free common schools. The schools wherever located are always the institutions of the State. The schools in each supervisory district are the schools of the State and a part of the State system of free common schools established under the Constitution. A general policy adopted in relation to the management of the schools of the State applies alike to the schools of each supervisory district. This has been the accepted doctrine of the State in relation to public education for a century. This principle has been repeatedly upheld by the highest courts of the State. You are therefore not to look upon the schools of your supervisory district as being separate and distinct from the schools of the rest of the State. Each of you has a common interest and purpose in all your work which bears upon the entire school system of the State.

What has been said upon this point should not be construed to mean that there is to be a tendency to centralize in working out and carrying into effect the details of the operations of the school system. This discussion has been for the purpose of pointing out as clearly as possible the relations which you bear to the State in the performance of your duties. On the other hand, the greatest liberty and freedom and initiative will be accorded district superintendents. They are not to be restricted or hampered. The burden of many details which the Education Department has been required to administer under the present plan of supervision is to be turned over to you, but you will be held to a strict accountability in your plan of executing them. It is quite probable that Mr Wiswell will obtain more information from daily inspection reports and will therefore be less exacting in his demands for a final annual report on library affairs. It is also within the range of human possibilities for Mr Sullivan to loosen the reins somewhat on the distribution of blank attendance certificates. If he should, you may rest assured that there will be a day of final reckoning for the superintendent who transcends his power in the issuance of one of these certificates. In short, if you will do as much to exalt and dignify and respect the office of district superintendent as the Commissioner of Education and all those associted with him will do, you can make the office one of the most important, honorable and serviceable in the public school system.

In this connection it seems advisable to comment upon a practice which has grown up in the office of school commissioner. It is the practice of shifting responsibility. Many school commissioners who were unwilling to shoulder official responsibility have often said, "This is a requirment of the Department and I have no discretion in the matter," "I shall be willing to do this if the Department will consent," and at the same time they well knew that the law prohibited their doing the very things under discussion. The days are rare when the Department does not receive communications from teachers and school officers saying that they have written upon the request of a school commissioner. Conduct of this kind weakens the grasp of your professional standing and authority and utterly destroys your official influence. Meet every question upon its merits and when a direction or even an official order is to be given perform your duties squarely and take the

responsibility that goes with it. Do the thing because you know it is the right thing to do and not because some superior official may have suggested it. Performance of your official duty in this manner will strengthen your character and your official prestige and command the respect of your constituents.

Before January 1, 1912, you should become so familiar with the Education Law that you will be able to answer any ordinary legal school question. If a question is presented to you for determination and you need time to investigate, take it and inform your inquirer that you will advise him within a specified time. Then go into the question and determine it. You will surprise yourself in a short time on your accumulation of a knowledge of the school law and Department regulations and also on your ability to determine things yourself. Write to the Department whenever necessary or when you need assistance upon a vexatious question. Ordinarily write direct to the chief of the division who has the administration of the work to which the subject matter of your inquiry is related. If his reply is not sufficiently illuminating, write an assistant commissioner and, if this official disappoints you or fails to give the aid sought, go direct to the court of appeals in educational matters in this State—to the Commissioner of Education. There you will always be heard with cordiality, patience and helpfulness.

So far the functions of your office have been treated in a general way only. With these general principles in mind, let us consider some of the specific phases of your work which should command your prompt attention.

The question has been frequently asked, "What is the first thing which we shall be expected to do?" You are to enter upon your term of office on January 1, 1912. That day is a legal holiday and one of those holidays on which the public schools may not be in session. Nothing will be expected of you on that day. But on the following morning at near nine o'clock, you should be at the door of some schoolhouse. There should be two hundred and seven real genuine school inspections on that day. There should be a thorough examination into the physical conditions of the school property and the equipment of the school. The construction of doors, stairways, staircases etc., should be especially looked into to ascertain if the law intended to provide adequate egress in case of fire is complied with. If the building needs repairs or if its condition is such

that a new building should be erected or if the construction of the outbuildings does not conform to the law and they are not in a clean and wholesome condition, you should wait upon the trustee before you leave the district. You may be able to obtain from the teacher information as to the sentiment of the district and the characteristics of the trustee before you call upon him. Talk with him informally about the situation and show him the needs of the district. He will not always readily agree with you but this need not discourage you. If necessary induce him to call an informal meeting which you may attend and there present in as convincing manner as possible the neglect of the district and the improvements which should be made.

You should make a careful inventory of the apparatus and other necessary helps. If the district has not a suitable dictionary, globe, maps, charts, furniture etc., you should make a note of it. You should examine the school library to ascertain if the books which it contains are adapted to the needs of the district and are sufficient to meet the demands of the elementary syllabus. A deficiency in this respect should be noted. These too are matters which you should take up with the trustee before leaving the district. As these officers are usually busy men and sometimes of defective memory, it would be well to advise them that you will send a written report of the district needs with the expectation that they will be provided without delay. The teacher may be relied upon to advise you whether your suggestions have been complied with. A second visit to a school may be necessary to see that improvements are being made as suggested. Never fail to follow up any case demanding attention until your directions have been fully complied with. Acquire the reputation from the start of demanding only those things which are just and proper and equitable to the interests of the children and then insist upon a complete compliance with your demands.

Proceed cautiously but firmly. Very often you can secure the cooperation of influential women as well as men who will be of material aid in your work of improvements. Be patient and exhaust every available means before issuing a formal order, but make such order when necessary. The law vests you with much power in these matters and you should know your rights therein. A trustee may expend $50 for repairs to the schoolhouse without authorization by a district meeting.

If that amount is insufficient, you have the authority to make an order authorizing the expenditure of an amount not to exceed $200. When this amount has been expended, you may make an order for the expenditure of another like amount. You should designate in this order the particular repairs to be made.

When a schoolhouse has no furniture or its supply is insufficient or if the furniture in use is unfit and not worth repairing, you may make an order directing the trustee to expend $100 or so much thereof as may be necessary for the purchase of suitable furniture. You should designate in your order the furniture which must be provided.

When a schoolhouse is unfit for use and not worth repairing, you may make an order of condemnation and compel the erection of a new building. You have absolute authority to determine the amount which should be expended in the construction of such building. The district meeting may reduce the amount expressed in your order by 25 per cent but if you are proficient in percentage you can fix the amount on a basis to afford a school building adequate to the needs of the district. The making of one of these orders should come only when "patience has ceased to be a virtue" and the assessed valuation of the district which determines its ability to pay should be taken into consideration.

Give special attention to the provisions of section 457 of the Education Law which relates to the outbuildings. School authorities have full power to include in a tax budget the amount which a district superintendent approves for constructing or repairing these buildings. Failure on the part of a trustee or a board of education to obey this section of the law is sufficient ground for removal from office and for withholding the public money of the district. Do not hesitate to invoke this authority when it is necessary to provide such outbuildings as should be found in any civilized community.

Many of our school districts have inadequate sites. You should inaugurate a movement which will lead to an increase in the size of school sites. The children of every school district in the State are entitled to a playground. It should not be upon the streets. Play enters as much into the proper education of a child as study. These playgrounds might well be called the schools' athletic fields. They should be large enough to afford room for the usual games in which children are in-

terested. They might well contain croquet grounds, tennis courts, a ball ground, etc. Of course, it will not be possible to provide all these things in all the school districts in the State, but if your interest in the matter and your powers of persuasion are sufficient, very many of these may be provided in thousands of the districts and all of them in some. Start the movement in one district and see how rapidly the plan will spread. The expense is not great in a city and will be even less in the country. Principal Deevey of one of the public schools of this city will be very glad to show you an equipment which cost $125 and provides amusement for four hundred children. Every village and many of the country centers should provide a playground where the boys of the community may as a matter *of right* have recreation and amusement without becoming trespassers. The logical place for these recreation centers is in connection with the schools. Establish such centers for the boys and they will not be found at the country grocery listening to and participating in the filthy discussions which you and I know abound in such places.

You will be expected to forward to the Education Department weekly reports of your visitations. Proper blanks will be transmitted to you in due time. There will be one change in relation to these reports to which your attention is directed. Except in extraordinary cases the Department will not communicate with school officers on the necessity of improvements to school property. District superintendents will attend to such matters. To be of service these reports must be transmitted regularly at the end of each week.

All reports required of district superintendents must be filed as directed by the proper officer of the Department. Unnecessary reports or duplication of reports so far as possible will be avoided. The serviceableness of a report depends upon its prompt transmission. A single superintendent may hold up important work of the Department through failure to make his report as required by law. An efficient officer will not be guilty of such an offence and the offence will not be tolerated in another officer.

There are about fourteen hundred school districts in the State having an enrolment of less than ten pupils each. There are also fourteen hundred school districts having an assessed valuation of $20,000 or less. This is an average of seven of these small districts to each supervisory district. In some counties the average is lower

and in many it is much greater. Nearly one-half of these districts are located in twelve counties. These are as follows: Cattaraugus, 41; Chenango, 75; Cortland, 43; Delaware, 68; Jefferson, 54; Madison, 64; Oneida, 75; Oswego, 41; Otsego, 90; St Lawrence, 58; Steuben, 50; Washington, 43.

A satisfactory school can hardly be maintained with so small a number of pupils and the expense of the maintenance of a good school on such a low valuation makes the taxation burdensome. It would therefore be in the interests of economy of administration and sound school policy if all of these districts could be dissolved and annexed to adjoining districts. Such action, however desirable, is often impossible. Yet such action might be taken in many of these cases. The subject should have your attention. It is not intended that you should immediately make such orders as the Education Law authorizes you to make in such cases to wipe out all of these districts. In the dissolution of school districts, this general principle is controlling: "Where a school is already established and the inhabitants of the district insist upon retaining it and are willing to support it, the district should not be dissolved." Of course, some overwhelming educational necessity might be sufficient to overcome this general rule. The action which you take in these cases should be with the common consent of the districts to be affected. When you have become sufficiently acquainted with the territory of your district to reach a conclusion on the advisability of action in any district, you should take the question up with the trustee and other leading citizens in the district. Point out to them the advisability of living in a school district which is strong numerically and financially instead of one which is weak. Show to them that their property is enhanced more in value by a strong school within a reasonable walking distance than a weak school nearer by.

We have considered only the physical side of the school. Suitable buildings, adequate equipment and attractive grounds have their place and influence in our scheme of public education. But the professional side of the work is quite as important. Your inspection of this phase of school work is one of the most vital services which you are to render in your advisory capacity. You will have some inadequately trained and inexperienced teachers under your direction. They need your assistance and many of them desire it. Gain their confidence by in-

dicating your kindly interest in them and your endeavor to be of service to them.

The place where you can render your greatest service is in the schools of your poorest teachers. You will be found there oftener than in your best schools. The one great end to be attained is better teaching. Better teaching will make the school more attractive and hold the children longer. You should resolutely determine that the teaching of the fundamentals shall be more patient, accurate and thorough and shall have direct bearing upon the child's life. You are to give the same intelligent direction to the work in our ungraded schools that a city or village superintendent gives to the schools under his supervision. You should guide each teacher in the course of study. You should determine along what lines work shall be emphasized in the seventh and eighth grades. Your body will be given representation on each of the committees which outline the work of the elementary syllabus. Previous to the Capitol fire, members of the Department had prepared for rural schools several sample programs based upon the work done in some of the best of these schools. This material was destroyed but the work is again well under way and will be in printed form for your service in the near future. In all of this work you should have clearly in your mind that the prime function of the elementary schools is to develop the intellectual powers of the child and to inculcate into his being the idea that he is ultimately to take his position in life to render service in some form not only for himself but for mankind in general.

To accomplish all these things there must be better teachers. How are these to be obtained and how can district superintendents aid in securing them? There are employed in the present school commissioner districts fifteen thousand of these teachers. About four thousand of these hold life state certificates, college graduate certificates, State normal school diplomas and special certificates. These teachers are generally employed in the schools maintaining academic departments. The ungraded schools are usually taught by those holding training class certificates and other forms of certificates issued by the school commissioners. About one-half of these hold training class certificates. Only four hundred and thirty of the elementary certificates were issued last year and we look to a discontinuance of this form of certificate.

Eighty-nine training classes are maintained at present. It will not be possible materially to increase this number. The number of applicants for admission to these classes is insufficient to warrant such action. About the best that can be expected is one class for every two supervisory districts. Superintendents should agree upon the schools to be designated to instruct these classes. It is immaterial in which supervisory district the class is maintained. The school containing the best facilities for this work and able to command the largest number of the best qualified applicants should be agreed upon.

We must gradually work to a higher standard of qualifications for admission to these classes. One-third of those now entering training classes have completed an approved four-year high school course. This should be the ultimate requirement for admission to such classes. Through your efforts this standard may be set. Some of you will say that the issuance of the teacher's academic certificate diverts this class of pupils from the training classes. The facts do not sustain this argument. There are more high school graduates in the training classes now than there were before the issuance of the academic teacher's certificate. The issuance of this form of certificate should increase the number of this grade of pupils in the training classes. Over one thousand teachers holding the academic certificate were employed in the rural schools last year. An additional thousand will be employed this year. At the end of next year and annually thereafter, there will be about two thousand teachers who have had two years' experience in teaching, who are graduates of an approved high school course, and who are without certificates legally qualifying them to teach. It is from this class of teachers that you should find recruits for your training classes. With their education and experience, and one year's work in a training class, they would possess a splendid equipment for teaching in our country schools. Locate these teachers. Suggest this course to them and induce as many of them as possible to enter training classes.

Your visits to the schools of a town will reveal the weakest points of your teachers. You may discover that the subject of reading is poorly taught. Call a meeting of the teachers of the town. If you are not an expert in teaching reading, find some one who is. Call upon the normal school nearest you for assistance. Call upon the training class teacher or upon the principal of one of your high schools or some other teacher in

your district who is able to give instruction in that particular subject. Devote the day to a consideration of it and then go back into these schools in the following week and see that the improvements suggested at the conference are put into operation. If the teachers are weak in the teaching of arithmetic, pursue a similar course. Do not feel that this work is impossible until some substitute for teachers institutes is provided. Do your best with the forces at your command and any additional service necessary to the success of your work will in due time adjust itself and will be upon proper, well-conceived plans.

Put as much life and spirit into the classroom work as possible. Enthuse your teachers. Show them how to bring their pupils into the actual spirit of the subjects in which instruction is given. Show them for instance that the study of history is not a consideration of dead matter but of subjects which still bear upon and influence the life and development of our intellectual progress and our democratic institutions. Inaugurate a campaign incident to school work by which the school children shall mark every historical spot in every school district in the State. Indicate the great Indian trails, the line of march in the great Revolutionary struggle, such as Washington's retreat up the Hudson, Schuyler's operations in the Champlain valley, the battles of Saratoga and Oriskany, Sullivan's expedition, etc. To mark these historical lines, use the common boulder, the granite or the bluestone which is found in nearly every county in the State. This can be done without loss of time to the children and be made an instrument of great benefit to them and of patriotic service to the State.

Notwithstanding the great progress which has been made in the educational work of the State, there are yet many important questions connected with the administration of the public school system which have not been satisfactorily worked out. If there were no unsolved problems in this work, your opportunities would be somewhat limited. It is your good fortune that there still exist many questions of educational policy to be determined in the particular field which you district superintendents represent. These problems demand careful consideration from all those who are charged with responsibility in the administration of the State's educational system.

It has long been the ambition of the people of every small village in the State to provide the best educational facilities possible for their children and yet this work has been planned

without some real definite purpose to be accomplished. The enactment of the union free school act in 1853 was an expression of the sentiment of the people upon this question. The purpose of that law was to bring together more pupils and a greater amount of property to the support of a single school so that more efficient teachers might be employed and broader courses of study maintained without imposing too great a burden of taxation upon the locality. It was this desire of the people for more advanced instruction and the enactment of the law of 1853 which has developed our splendid system of free public high schools which permeates every section of the State. It often occurred that these academic institutions were organized because the overwhelming public sentiment of the community was in favor of providing more liberal educational facilities for all the children. In many cases schools of academic grade were organized because enterprising business men desired to maintain as good schools as some rival neighboring village possessed. In other cases people desired their children at home at the ages when they attend high schools and they believed it would be more economical to provide advanced instruction at home than to pay board and tuition away from home. It is immaterial what the controlling motive was which led to the organization of these schools. We have them and none too many. The work which they are doing is neither unappreciated by the State nor unimportant in its influence upon the life of the communities in which they are located. The fact that the people have cheerfully organized and maintained these schools is evidence of their support and cooperation in all reasonable plans which will promote sound educational policies and provide a scheme of instruction which will bear directly upon the training and equipment of boys and girls for the service which they will in all probability assume in the practical activities of life.

There are six hundred and ninety-eight free public high schools in this State. These schools are distributed as follows: seventy-three in the cities, forty-one in the villages having a population of 5000 or more, seventy-eight in the villages having a population between 2000 and 5000, and five hundred and five in the villages having a population of 2000 or less. In other words, of the six hundred and ninety-eight public high schools in the State, five hundred and eighty-three are located within the territory which is under the supervisory jurisdiction of the two

hundred and seven district superintendents who are to assume their duties on January 1st next.

The duties of a district superintendent relate largely to rural schools and therefore to elementary education. Yet, in my judgment, the question as to what shall be the definite work of these five hundred and eighty-three schools of secondary grade which are located in the supervisory districts of the State is one of the most important questions which will demand your serious consideration. The work which these schools do has an important bearing upon the work and life of all the schools which are tributary to them.

Statistics upon the basis of supervisory districts are not available but the statistics based upon the reports of school commissioners are sufficient to show the point which is under consideration. These reports include the statistics of the villages of 5000 population or more. The high schools which are located outside of the cities were attended last year by about 30,400 pupils. The elementary schools in the same portion of the State for the same year were attended by about 430,000 pupils. The expense of maintaining these high schools and academic departments was $2,590,183. The expense of maintaining all the elementary schools outside of cities for the same year was $10,-145,585. In other words, the number of children in attendance upon the elementary schools is to the number attending the high schools of the supervisory districts of the State as *fifteen* to *one* while the expense of the maintenance of these schools is as *four* to *one*. The point is not as to whether we are spending too little upon the elementary schools or too much upon the high schools. It is not even intended to suggest that less should be expended on academic instruction, for much more could be advantageously used for this purpose. The question is, Are the people getting as much for what they are expending on these academic schools as they should receive? Could these institutions be operated on a basis which would give a greater return on the investment?

The number of pupils attending the high schools which are located outside of the cities is about one-fourth of the total enrolment of all the high schools of the State. Assuming that the attendance for each of the four years in these high schools bears the same relation as their aggregate attendance does to the aggregate attendance of all the high schools we obtain illuminating results. This basis of computation would show that in

high schools of the supervisory districts there would be the following enrolment:

First year	15400
Second year	8200
Third year	5000
Fourth year	3400
Number graduating	2500

From these figures it is seen that at the end of the first year of these high schools about one-half of the pupils drop out. At the end of the second year, about two-thirds of those in attendance during the first year have dropped out and at the end of the third year about four-fifths of those in attendance during the first year have dropped out. Of those who enter the fourth year, only about three-fourths are graduated. This decrease in yearly attendance may be accounted for in a measure through the fact that part of these schools are only junior and middle high schools. But even at that the situation is humiliating. There are on the average four graduates to each of the six hundred high schools. It is not an uncommon thing to find a high school having one or two members in the graduating class who are preparing for college.

Is it not possible to redirect the work of these schools by the adoption of courses of study which will attract and hold and constantly increase the number of pupils in these advanced schools? It is not intimated that these schools should not prepare pupils for college or that because there are so few desiring to pursue the college preparatory course that such courses should be discontinued. Most assuredly these courses are to be continued and you should be able to increase the number each year who enter upon the study of such courses. You should soon become acquainted with every boy and girl in attendance upon the schools of your supervisory district. You should be an inspiration to many of them and you should encourage and direct as many of them to the colleges of our country as show attainments which should lead them in that path.

But you are to do even more than this. You are the official guardians of the educational interests of about four hundred and fifty thousand children. Of these only fifteen thousand ever enter the secondary schools. What is to be done for the four hundred and thirty-five thousand, about one-half of whom have not satisfactorily completed the elementary course? These boys

and girls are to have your serious thought and attention. These six hundred high schools touch the life of every farm in the State. These schools are within driving distance at least of every home in the agricultural sections of the State. What can you do to aid in placing in these schools a scheme of instruction that will bear directly upon the service in life which these young people will be required to render and which will be uplifting and helpful to them? No scheme of instruction is complete or fair today which fails to take into account the needs of the girls who are to become the future mothers and homemakers in this great State. It is fortunate for the interests of the State that there are sitting in your membership today thirty-nine women who will see to it that the children of their sex shall have an equal advantage in the instruction of the public schools which is to fit them for their life service. This is one of your problems and when you shall have contributed to its solution you will have rendered the State and all mankind a service of immeasurable value. You will not be accountable to me for what you fail to do for the secondary schools under your supervision but I am sure that my esteemed colleague Dr Wheelock, the Second Assistant Commissioner of Education, will have you in mind.

If important matters relating to your work have been omitted in this discussion, have the graciousness to overlook this shortcoming. If too much in detail has been suggested, have the charity to pardon the offense. It is the earnest hope of the speaker that matters sufficient in number and in importance have been suggested to afford you a year of busy, profitable, official life. Let us enter upon this work on January 1st next with a determination that an account of our stewardship at the end of the period of five years shall show a greater improvement in the educational facilities of our country schools than has been shown in any generation of their existence. Let the obligations imposed not only by law but by your conscience and the rare opportunity of a service vital to the interests of the State and her people be your inspiration in this work.